

8.0 NOISE ELEMENT

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The Town is generally characterized as a quiet, residential community. This element identifies and evaluates unwanted noise sources in the Town, and establishes goals and policies for reducing noise levels in the Town. Policies aimed at reducing noise levels must address specific sources of unwanted noise, as well as noise sensitive receptors.

Noise level generation, intensity, and related impacts should be considered in determining the placement of housing, open space areas, and other noise sensitive land uses.

8.2 NOISE INVENTORY

The Town conducted a community-wide noise survey in January 1999 that determined the existing noise environment within the Town. The major noise sources within the Town are traffic-generated, particularly along State Routes 17 and 85. There are no major stationary noise sources located within the Town's jurisdiction.

The Town determined noise contours using the Federal Highway Administration's Traffic Noise Prediction Model. Due to higher traffic volumes, the largest noise contours are State Routes 17 and 85, Blossom Hill Road, Lark Avenue, Los Gatos Boulevard, and Winchester Boulevard. Because of the circulation system changes and growth in the region, the Town's noise environment has changed over time. The opening of State Route 85 substantially increased noise levels along its alignment but also reduced local traffic and associated noise impacts on a number of roadways. Meanwhile, the increased traffic on State Route 17 has resulted in a substantial increase in noise levels along this freeway.

The only active railroad line in the Town parallels State Route 85 on the south between Winchester Boulevard and Pollard Road. Noise from these rail movements does not substantially impact the Town.

8.3 GOALS, POLICIES, IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIES

ISSUE: 1

Noise is a part of everyday life. There is scientific evidence documenting the detrimental effects of noise on an individual's physical, social, and psychological well being. People can tolerate noise to varying degrees but above certain levels, noise becomes a source of annoyance and even a health hazard. Noise may cause stress, disrupt conversation and social interactions, prevent or interrupt sleep, decrease a person's efficiency, and can cause temporary or chronic hearing loss.

Motor vehicles are the most pervasive source of noise in Los Gatos. The Town faces the challenge of maintaining its relatively quiet, residential atmosphere, and having two major highways (Hwy 17 and Hwy 85) run through its boundaries. The Town must identify how to deal with traffic noise from Hwy 17 and Hwy 85, and major streets such as Los Gatos Boulevard, Winchester Boulevard, and Los Gatos/Saratoga Road.

Mechanical equipment, construction activities, leafblowers, barking dogs and human activity also contribute to noise levels. In addition, the Town is concerned with how to keep late night noise from affecting the residential areas in the Downtown. Additional residential noise concerns exist within the Town in terms of how to prevent major development from disturbing adjacent residential uses.

Freedom from excessive noise is a major factor in maintaining a community's high quality of life.

Goal:

- N.G.1.1 To preserve the quiet atmosphere of the Town.
- N.G.1.2 To ensure that noise from new development and new land uses does not adversely affect existing land uses.
- N.G.1.3 Ensure that proposed development is not adversely affected by existing noise.

Policies:

- N.P.1.1 Ensure that roads constructed or improved by the Town of Los Gatos meet Town of Los Gatos noise level aspirations or, in some situations, the Los Gatos Noise Ordinance, to the maximum extent feasible.
- N.P.1.2 Ensure that all purchases of noise-producing Town equipment be made with careful consideration given to the noise impact they will create.
- N.P.1.3 Ensure that all services contracted or performed by the Town do not cause undue noise problems.
- N.P.1.4 Improve traffic flows without increasing speed levels to reduce high noise levels created by traffic congestion.
- N.P.1.5 Protect residential areas from noise by requiring appropriate site and building design, sound walls, and landscaping and by the use of noise attenuating construction techniques and materials.
- N.P.1.6 Employ the Ldn scale for the evaluation of outdoor noise for residential land uses and the LEQ scale for evaluation of outdoor noise for non-residential uses.
- N.P.1.7 Pursue the following outdoor noise limits as representing the long range community aspirations and work toward their accomplishment, even though some may be presently unattainable:

Land use	Max. Ldn Value	Max. Leq 24 Value	Comparable Noise Source	Response
Residential	55dB(A)		Light Auto Traffic (100 feet)	Quiet
Commercial		70dB(A)	Free way Traffic (50 feet)	Telephone Use Difficult
Industrial		70 dB(A)	Free way T raffic (50 feet)	Telephone Use Difficult

Land use	Max. Ldn Value	Max. Leq 24 Value	Comparable Noise Source	Response
Open Space:				
Intensive: (Developed park)		55dB(A)	Light Auto Traffic (100 feet)	Quiet
Passive: (natural park)		50dB(A)	Light Auto Traffic (100 feet)	Quiet
Hospital		55dB(A)	Light Auto Traffic (100 feet)	Quiet
Educational		55dB(A)	Light Auto Traffic (100 feet)	Quiet

N.D.1.8 Apply the same standards for indoor noise levels to single family residential uses as to multi-family dwellings.

N.P.1.9 Ensure that land use patterns and traffic patterns do not expose sensitive land uses or sensitive noise receptors are not exposed to unacceptable noise levels.

N.P.1.10 Pursue reduction of individual auto use by requiring a plan for alternatives to auto use whenever the traffic generated by any development would result in an adverse increase in air and noise pollution.

N.P.1.11 Adopt standards or criteria for the review of noise impacts.

N.P.1.12 Evaluate the noise impacts of new development in terms of any increase of the existing ambient noise levels and the potential for adverse noise impacts on nearby or adjacent properties. The evaluation shall consider short term construction noise and On-going operational noise.

N.P.1.13 Evaluate the potential for existing ambient and/or intrusive noise to adversely affect new development.

Implementing Strategies:

N.I.1.1 Keeping current: The Town will continuously review data from both the public and private sector to update procedures and programs which assist in effectuating the goals and policies stated herein.

Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Building, Engineering and Police

N.I.1.2 Noise reduction program: The Town shall establish a measurable program to reduce noise, including effective procedures to monitor noise and enforce noise reduction.

Time Frame: 2000 - 2005
Responsible Party: Building, Engineering and Police

- N.I.1.3 Traffic noise: Traffic volumes and average speeds should be reviewed periodically to insure maximum effectiveness in reducing noise levels, especially adjacent to residential areas.
- Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Engineering and Police
- N.I.1.4 Sound walls: The Town should identify those areas adjacent to existing or proposed State Highways that presently need acoustical protection and request that the State construct noise attenuation walls as a noise reducing measure.
- Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Engineering and Police
- N.I.1.5 Noise buffers: The Zoning Ordinance should be amended to require buffers or separation between noise generating uses and noise sensitive uses. (Examples of noise sensitive uses include, but are not limited to, residences, hospitals, schools, libraries, and parks.)
- Time Frame: 2001 - 2002
Responsible Party: Planning, Engineering and Police
- N.I.1.6 Noise analysis: The Town as part of the Environmental Review process, shall require an acoustical analysis of projects and all input related to noise levels shall use the adopted standard of measurement.
- Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Planning, Engineering and Police
- N.I.1.7 Noise legislation: The Town shall continue to support legislation that encourages or requires reducing of noise levels for machinery, motor vehicles and other equipment that generates offensive noise.
- Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Police
- N.I.1.8 Town equipment: The Town shall require that all Town owned and operated equipment and equipment operated under contract with the Town contain adequate noise attenuation equipment. The Town shall buy equipment that operates quietly.
- Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Town Manager and Public Works
- N.I.1.9 Interagency cooperation: The Town shall take a proactive stance in cooperating with transportation agencies, such as Cal Trans and VTA, to reduce noise from existing and future facilities. The design and location of all facilities will be considered.
- Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Planning, Engineering and Police
- N.I.1.10 Enforcement: The Town shall encourage all law enforcement agencies operating within the Town limits to enforce the State Vehicle Code noise standards.
- Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Police

N.I.1.11 Standard for comparison: Any Environmental Review prepared for the Town for a project that identifies noise factors shall relate the noise data to the Town's noise ordinance to give the Planning Commission and Town Council a standard for comparison.

Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Planning, Engineering and Police

N.I.1.12 New roads: The Town shall require that stringent noise control measures accompany construction of new County, State, and Federal roads and highways, preferably by depressing them, but also by constructing sound walls and berms, by landscaping, and by soliciting funds to modify existing noise-sensitive buildings where appropriate.

Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Engineering and Public Works

N.I.1.13 Noise Level: The Town shall require all noise sensitive developments adjacent to, or within an area where noise levels exceed community aspirations to include a noise study and recommendation for reducing noise impact to acceptable level.

Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Planning, Engineering and Police

N.I.1.14 Noise ordinance: The Town shall have a noise ordinance and maintain the standards. For commercial and industrial developments adjacent to residential neighborhoods additional restrictions may be applied to reduce noise intrusions in residential districts to an acceptable level.

Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Police

N.I.1.15 Community noise survey: The Town shall periodically conduct a community noise survey.

Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Engineering and Police

N.I.1.16 Development review: The Town shall adopt a procedure for reviewing the noise impacts of any proposed development.

Time Frame: On-going
Responsible Party: Planning, Engineering and Police

N.I.1.17 Future Study: Study a ban on gas-powered garden and construction tools and equipment within the Town.

Time Frame: 2002 - 2003
Responsible Party: Planning

N.I.1.18 CEQA: Establish significance criteria for evaluating increases in ambient noise resulting from new development and evaluating the compatibility of new development with the existing noise environment

Time Frame: 2002 - 2003
Responsible Party: Planning

N.I.1.19 Establish Standards that address ongoing operational noise.

Time Frame: 2002 - 2003

Responsible Party: Planning